Chapter 7  
Causative Verbs with PLACE Arguments

The first classes of verbs to require another look are causative verbs with PLACE arguments. These include two types: change-of-state verbs, with an abstract PLACE and change-of-location verbs, with a concrete PLACE. We begin with verbs that take an obligatory PLACE argument and then consider optional PLACE argument verbs.

7.1 Obligatory PLACE Arguments: render, put, and get are not Three-Argument Verbs

When we first encountered verbs that require two postverbal XPs in the syntax, like render, put, and one version of transitive get in (9), we claimed that their CSs are similar to resultatives, sharing the basic skeleton in (10).

(9)  
a. The computer rendered the typewriter useless.  
b. She put the books into the box.  
c. The spilled coffee got John’s typewriter wet.

(10)  
\[ \text{CAUSE} \left( \left[ \; \right] , \left[ \text{BECOME} \left( y, \left[ \text{PLACE AT} \ldots \right] \right) \right] \right) \]

However, the CS of each of these classes requires a slight modification. First, whereas the agent for a resultative is an EVENT, the agent for put is a THING and the agent for render is unspecified: it can be either a THING or an EVENT consisting of an entire embedded clause (see Chapter 5, footnote 4). For this reason, we do not represent the agent with a variable like w, which stands for THING, but instead use brackets. Second, render is like a resultative in taking an abstract PLACE, since it is a change-of-state verb. However, the PLACE for put, a change-of-location verb, is concrete, a location. And as we might expect, there is a third type, whose PLACE is unspecified – it can be either a state or a location. This is the get and keep class.

We will see below that despite their differences, all three of these subclasses pattern with resultatives in their linking: the theme, y, does not link, in accordance with the Prohibition Against Double Fusion, in (7), above.
7.1.1 Abstract PLACE Verbs: render and make

The CS for render and (under the relevant reading) make, is shown in (11).

\[(11) \ [ \text{CAUSE} \ ( \ [ \ ] \ , \ \text{BECOME} \ ( \ y \ , \ [\text{PLACE-a AT ... } ] \ ) ) ) ] \]

The PLACE is abstract (abbreviated as PLACE-a), and the agent is unspecified because, as we just noted, it can be an entire inherited CS clause (an EVENT), as in (12) or simply a THING, as in (13).

\[(12) \ a. \ \text{Their buying a computer rendered their typewriters useless.} \]
\[\text{b. His continual banging on it made the typewriter useless.} \]
\[(13) \ a. \ \text{The computer rendered the typewriter useless.} \]
\[\text{b. The jammed keys made the typewriter useless.} \]

Thus the internal structure of the agent for these verbs is supplied not by their lexical entries but by the choice of NP subject in the syntax.

We have been operating on the assumption that the PLACE for these verbs links as an argument and our tests confirm this. The PLACE PPs fail the V-projection fronting and do so tests in (14a), while the PP adjuncts in (14b) pass them.

\[(14) \ a. \ *\text{The surgeon said that he could render John’s arm usable again and}
\[\text{render John’s arm} \ [\text{he did [usable again].} \]
\[\text{*His boss makes John [unhappy] but his wife does so [happy].} \]
\[\text{b. The surgeon said that he could render John’s arm usable again [with an}
\[\text{operation] and render John’s arm usable again he did [with laparo-
\[\text{scopic surgery].} \]
\[\text{His boss makes John happy [on weekdays] and his wife does so [on}
\[\text{weekends].} \]

We propose, then, that for CSs based on (11), the agent and the PLACE link but the y theme in the change-of-state clause does not. The linking for render in (13a) is shown in (15).

\[(15) \ \text{DS: [np The computer] rendered [np the typewriter] [ap useless]}
\[\text{AS: \ [a \ [a]]} \]
\[\text{render} \]
\[\text{CS: [CAUSE ( \ [ \ ] \ , \ \text{BECOME} \ ( \ y \ , \ [\text{PLACE-a AT ... } ] \ ) ) ) ]} \]

So, useless is an argument of the verb render but the typewriter is not. The theme is implicit and with respect to the verb, the NP the typewriter is uninterpreted. Of course, the typewriter is interpreted as the theme of the entire event, but this is because it is at the same time the external argument (the subject) of render’s